

Message Text

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67

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 IO-14 MC-02 ACDA-19 DRC-01 /148 W

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R 181620Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7449

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USINT DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USINT BAGHDAD BY POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A DECON 4/18/75

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, XF, UR, EG

SUBJ: KAMAL JUMBLATT'S NEW ROLE IN DEFENSE OF ARAB MODERATION

SUMMARY: ON OTHER NOTEWORTHY ASPECT OF HEATED SOVIET-EGYPTIAN "DIALOGUE" BEING WAGED IN BEIRUT PRESS AND AMONG VARIOUS POLITICAL FACTIONS HERE (IN ADDITION TO DEVELOPMENTS NOTED OUR 4500) HAS BEEN SURPRISINGLY MODERATE BEHAVIOR OF ERSTWHILE LEBANESE/ARAB "PROGRESSIVE" LEADER AND PRO-FEDAYEEN LUMINARY, KAMAL JUMBLATT. SINCE HIS RETURN APRIL 10 FROM VISIT TO CAIRO, JUMBLATT HAS SPOKEN OUT STRONGLY IN DEFENSE OF EGYPTIAN FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLICY, IN SUPPORT OF SEARCH FOR PEACEFUL ME SETTLEMENT, IN CRITICISM OF USSR, AND IN OPPOSITION OF ARAB "EXTERMISTS", PARTICULARLY FEDAYEEN DIEHARDS, WHO VILLIFY SADAT AND INSIST ON PURSUING TOTAL VICTORY OVER ISRAEL. GIVEN DEPTH OF ANTI-SADAT FEELING ON PART OF SOVS AND JUMBLATT'S WELL-EARNED REPUTATION AS FAVORITE SOV FRONT-MAN IN LEBANON, HIS RECENT BEHAVIOR IS CAUSING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONSIDERABLE CONSTERNATION AMONG SOVS, FEDAYEEN AND THEIR LOCAL

(AND MORE PREDICTABLE) "PROGRESSIVE" ALLIES. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE HIS RETURN ON APRIL 10 FROM TALKS WITH PRESIDENT SADAT IN CAIRO, METCURIAL LEBANESE "SOCIALIST" LEADER KAMAL JUMBLATT HAS BEEN STARTLING LOCAL LEFTIST CIRCLES BY SERIES OF REMARKABLY SOBER, REFLECTIVE AND CRITICAL PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON ME AFFAIRS IN GENERAL AND EGYPTIAN-SOVIET AND FEDAYEEN DEVELOPMENTS IN PARTICULAR. HE HAS MADE CLEAR HIS BRIEF THAT "NEW REALITIES" IN ME AND INTERNATIONAL POWER-POLITICS (INTER ALIA, US-SOVIET DETENTE) HAVE DEFINITELY ENCHANCED PROPECTS FOR ACHIEVEMENT OF PEACEFUL ME SETTLEMENT. IN SO DOING, HE HAS BEEN DEBUNKING POSSIBILITY THAT ARABS WOULD EVER BECOME SUFFICIENTLY UNITED--MILITARILY, POLITICALLY OR PSYCHOLOGICALLY--TO INFLICT TOTAL DEFEAT ON ISRAEL, AND HAS RIDICULED AS "UNSUITABLE AND USELESS" FOR ME CONCEPT OF VIETNAM-TYPE "POPULAR LIBERATION WAR" SO OFTEN EXPOUNDED BY LEFTIST AND FEDAYEEN IDEOLOGUES. HE HAS ALSO CHARACTERIZED THOSE ARABS WHO REJECT PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT AS "CHILDISH EGOISTS WHO FIGHT THEIR BATTLES THROUGH BINOCULARS". FOR ARABS TO ADOPT INTRANSIGENCE, HE WARNS, WOULD CAUSE THEM LOSE SYMPATHIES OF FRIENDLY FOREIGN GOVTS, ENCOURAGE USG TO PLAY OFF ARAB STATES AMONG EACH OTHER, AND IMPEDE RESTORATION OF PALESTINIAN "RIGHTS" AS WELL AS HARM ARAB AMBITIONS TO PLAY MORE INDEPENDENT AND INFLUENTIAL ROLE IN WORLD AFFAIRS.

2. WHILE STILL CAREFUL TO CREDIT SOVS FOR THEIR FRIENDSHIP AND ASSISTANCE TO ARABS, JUMBLATT HAS POINTEDLY PRAISED SADAT FOR HIS RECENT STEP TO INCREASE POLITICAL AND PRESS FREEDOMS IN EGYPT, AS WEGWR PZNUPENDING--ALBIET INDIRECTLY ON GROUNDS NOTED ABOVE--GOE EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER IN SEARCH FOR PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO ME CONFLICT. HE HAS PARROTTEED SADAT'S CHARGES RE INADEQUATE SOVIET ARMS AID AND EVEN DEFENDED LIFTING OF OIL EMBARGO AGAINST US, CONTENDING THAT SADAT AND SAUDIS "DOUBTLESS HAD GOOD REASONS FOR DOING SO".

3. ALTHOUGH JUMBLATT'S INITIAL REACTION HAS BEEN TO RATIONALIZE KIRYAT SHEMONA INCIDENT ON GROUNDS IT HAD BEEN CARRIED OUT BY FEDAYEEN OPERATING ENTIRELY WITHIN "OCCUPIED TERRITORIES" (AND HAD THEREFORE NOT VIOLATED ASSURANCE RE CESSATION OF FEDAYEEN CROSS-BORDER ACTIVITIES HE AND GOL HAD EARLIER RECEIVED FROM PLO LEADERSHIP), HE DROPPED ANOTHER BOMBSHELL (ON APRIL 17) BY PUBLICLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEPLORING KIRYAT SHEMONA RAID AND VOICING WISH THAT ARAB WORLD "WOULD RID ITSELF OF EXTREMIST ELEMENTS" RESPONSILBE FOR IT. HE ALSO LAMENTED FACT THAT SUCH "ELEMENTS" COULD NOT BE FORCED TO CONFORM TO PLO AGREEMENT TO CEASE OPERATION FROM LEBANESE TERRITORY. "BESIDES", HE SAYS, "I AM OPPOSED TO ALL ATTACKS AGAINST CIVILIANS AND CHILDERN, SINCE I AM CONVINCED THAT THE END CANNOT JUSTIFY THE MEANS".

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH WE WOULD LIKE TO THINK JUMBLATT'S SUDDEN CONVERSION TO MODERATION STEMS FROM HIS WELL-PUBLICIZED PERCHANT FOR HINDU-STYLE SOUL-SEARCHING AND MEDITATION, WE CANNOT HELP SUSPECTING THAT THIS WILY, FLEXIBLE POLITICAN HAS BEEN TESTING THE WINDS OF LATE AND HAS DECIDED (DOUBTLESS WITH SADAT'S ENCOURAGEMENT) TO HEDGE HIS "PROGRESSIVE" ATTACHMENTS WITH A FEW BETS ON THE SIDE OF THE "REACTIONARIES". HIS BEHAVIOR OVER PAST WEEK HAS APPARENTLY UNSETTLED HIS LEFTIST FRIENDS CONSIDERABLY. (LEAFLETS ATTACKING HIM FOR BEING PRO-EGYPT HAVE APPEARED IN BEIRUT STREETS. IN ADDITION, WE UNDERSTAND THA LEBANESE COMMUNIST PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE MET HERE APRIL 17 TO DISCUSS "WHAT TO DO ABOUT JUMBLATT", AND SOV OFFICIAL TOOK VERY NEGATIVE LINE RE JUMBLATT WITH EMBOFF ON APRIL 18.) HIS ACTIVITIES OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS ARE LIKELY TO UPSET THEM EVEN MORE. AFTER HAVING FLOURISHED FOR YEARS AS SAUDI ARABIA'S CHIEF BAITER AND TORMENTOR (TO POINT WHERE HIS VIRULENT ATTACKS ON SAG'S "MEDIEVAL" SYSTEM CAUSED FREQUENT UNPLEASANTNESS IN LEBANESE-SAUDI RELATIONS), JUMBLATT IS SCHEDULED EMBARK TODAY ON VISIT TO JIDDA AT SAG INVITATION. WOULD APPEAR THAT KAMAL BEY IS SEARCHING FOR NEW, WELL-ENDOWED GURU WHOSE NAME COULD TURN OUT TO BE FEISAL.
GODLEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PEACE, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, PARAMILITARY FORCES, POLITICAL LEADERS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 APR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MorefiRH
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BEIRUT04557
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740090-0955
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740434/aaaabegf.tel
Line Count: 136
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MorefiRH
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 JUN 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <07-Aug-2002 by MorefiRH>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KAMAL JUMBLATT'S NEW ROLE IN DEFENSE OF ARAB MODERATION SUMMARY: ON OTHER NOTEWORTHY ASPECT OF HEATED SOVIET-
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, XF, UR, EG, FEDAYEEN, (JUMBLATT, KAMAL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005